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House panel asks Taipei to return suspects in Calif. murder

By Ed Rogers
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A House Foreign Affairs subcommittee, responding to pleas from the widow of a murdered Chinese-American writer, yesterday called on the Republic of China to return the suspected killers to the United States to stand trial.

By a unanimous vote, the House Asian and Pacific Affairs subcommittee approved a resolution asking for the return of the suspects and calling on the Reagan administration to negotiate an agreement with Taipei that would smooth future extradition procedures.

The subcommittee also heard testimony calling for an end to arms sales to the Republic of China because of harassment and murder by its secret agents in this country.

Rep. Norman Y. Mineta, D-Calif., an Asian-American, denounced the Taipei government for the admitted role three of its intelligence officials played in the assassination of Henry Liu, a Chinese-American reporter in California.

"I say to my friends in Taiwan that U.S. law does not allow us to sell arms to a country when there is a systematic pattern of intimidation or harassment against U.S. citizens," Mr. Mineta said during his testimony.

"Mr. Chairman," he said, "if you want to introduce legislation tightening up the Arms Export Control Act, please count me as a supporter."

Stephen J. Solarz, D-N.Y., chairman of the subcommittee on Asian and Pacific affairs, asked Mr. Mineta if there already has been sufficient harassment and intimidation to trigger an arms sale cutoff under the act.

"My feeling is, yes," Mr. Mineta said.

"Is there a consistent pattern?"

"To me, this incident is enough to establish a pattern," Mr. Mineta said, referring to the murder of Mr. Liu at his home in Daly City, Calif., last Oct.

15 by two members of a Taiwanese group called the critic of the Taipei government.

Rep. Jim Leach, R-Iowa, the subcommittee's ranking Republican, said it is "a little premature to consider ending arms sales" because the rights of the Taiwanese must be considered.

But in an earlier statement, he said, "The Taiwan government has been effectively on notice since 1981 that any action taken by their agents against any individual in this country ... would seriously jeopardize the warm relations between our governments."

Rather than consider an arms cutoff at this time Mr. Leach proposed that Taiwan be urged to reduce the number of its agents in this country, and also to end its long-standing martial-law rule.

"The murder of Henry Liu must be seen in this larger context and the government of Taiwan urged once

again to repeal martial law and restore to the people of Taiwan a fully functional democratic system," Mr. Leach said.

Mr. Solarz set a tone of alarm as the three-hour hearing began:

"I cannot exaggerate the sense of outrage which the reported involvement of officials of the Taiwan government in the murder of an American citizen on American soil provokes in me.

"Part of my outrage stems from the knowledge that this is not the first time that Taiwan has abused the freedoms of individuals in the United States.

"In the past, there have been numerous credible charges of surveillance, intimidation and harassment in the United States by agents of the Taiwan intelligence services,

particularly with respect to Taiwanese students in our country."

Mr. Liu's death was elevated to an international incident last month by the voluntary admission by the Taiwanese government that three high-level intelligence officials and two suspected gunmen had been arrested.

William Brown, deputy assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, testified that the Taiwan government had cooperated by allowing visiting FBI agents to give the suspected gunmen lie detector tests.

The State Department has repeatedly asked that the suspects, already charged with murder in California, be returned to this country to face trial. But Taiwan has refused. The

two countries do not have an extradition treaty.

Rep. Gerald Solomon, R-N.Y., said the suspects might face more severe punishment in Taiwan than in lenient U.S. courts, but others argued there would always be lingering suspicions about Taiwan justice.

Mr. Liu's widow, Helen Liu, testified that her husband had written books and news articles that were critical of President Chiang Ching-kuo and his government policies.